



POSITION STATEMENT

THE CERTIFIED NURSE-MIDWIFE/CERTIFIED MIDWIFE AS FIRST ASSISTANT AT SURGERY

Background:

Serving as first assistant at cesarean section is a frequently performed expanded midwifery practice skill. Midwives have found that expanding their practice to include the ability to serve as first assistant may promote continuity of care, improve access to emergency services, and increase the value of the CNM/CM as a member of the healthcare team.

As with any expanded midwifery practice skill, the choice to act as first assistant reflects the midwife's employment and professional interests. In addition, acting as first assist is governed by the hospital credentialing process, medical staff regulations, and, in some states, licensure. Following appropriate education and training, individual midwives might seek privileges to assist at cesarean sections, tubal ligations and/or general gynecological surgery.

Individuals who seek certification from the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) must graduate from an education program accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) (formerly the American College of Nurse-Midwives Division of Accreditation (ACNM DOA)) and must demonstrate clinical skills and scientific knowledge as outlined in the ACNM Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice. Midwifery education includes knowledge and competencies required of first assistants such as patient assessment, anatomy and physiology, and principles of wound repair. Midwifery education also includes the development of basic surgical skills such as aseptic technique and suturing.

Consistent with the ACNM Standards for the Practice of Midwifery, the organization provides ACNM and AMCB certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) a mechanism to expand their scope of practice and gain new technical skills by following the steps outlined in Standard VIII of the Standards for the Practice of Midwifery: Guidelines for the Incorporation of New Procedures into Midwifery Practice.

Position:

It is the position of the American College of Nurse-Midwives that first assist at cesarean and gynecologic surgery is within the scope of expanded practice of a CNM/CM.

To assure that midwives who serve as first assistants do so within the scope and safety of midwifery practice, ACNM requires that midwives who have not been appropriately educated and trained as a first assistant prior to their midwifery education, follow the Guidelines for the Incorporation of New Procedures into Midwifery Practice to learn the knowledge and procedures necessary for being a first assistant at obstetric or gynecologic surgery and to document the

training undertaken. Utilizing these standards and guidelines, CNMs/CMs are responsible for obtaining and documenting their educational process including formal study, supervised practice, and comprehensive evaluation.

Because ACNM guidelines are competency based, ACNM opposes the requirement of a specific credential external to the midwifery profession for the CNM/CM to first assist with OB/GYN surgery. ACNM believes that a number of different education and training mechanisms are appropriate for midwives who choose to develop expanded practice skills necessary for the first assistant role for obstetrical or gynecological procedures.

References:

1. Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice
2. Standards for the Practice of Midwifery
3. ACNM Handbook: The Midwife as First Assistant

* Midwifery as used throughout this document refers to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) or the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB), formerly the ACNM Certification Council, Inc. (ACC).

Source: Division of Standards & Practice
Approved by ACNM Board of Directors: May 1998
Revised: October 2008